

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL ZAGREB IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, YO (TOTH, LASZLO)

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTING ON TOTH CASE

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE APPEARING IN "AROUND THE
WORLD" COLUMN ON PAGE A-17 OF WASHINGTON POST FOR JULY 21.

BEGIN TEXT. AMERICAN PRISONER. BELGRADE - A YUGOSLAV-
BORN AMERICAN CITIZEN SENTENCED LAST YEAR TO SEVEN YEARS
IN PRISON FOR INDUSTRIAL SPYING WILL BE FREED FRIDAY,
SOURCES HERE SAID.

LASZLO TOTH, 46, OF DENVER, COLO., REPORTEDLY WAS PARDONED
TWO MONTHS AGO BY PRESIDENT TITO, BUT LEGAL DIFFICULTIES
OVER HIS DUAL CITIZENSHIP DELAYED HIS RELEASE. YUGOSLAVIA
STILL CONSIDERS TOTH A YUGOSLAV CITIZEN, ALTHOUGH HE IS A
NATURALIZED AMERICAN.

TOTH WAS ARRESTED IN AUGUST 1975 WHILE VISITING VERBAS,
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HIS HOMETOWN. HE WAS ACCUSED OF TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE

SUGAR REFINERY THERE WHERE HE FORMERLY HAD BEEN EMPLOYED
AS RESEARCH DIRECTOR. END TEXT.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE APPEARING ON PAGE 7 OF

OF NEW YORK TIMES FOR JULY 21.

BEGIN TEXT. YUGOSLAVIA PLANS TO FREE U.S. CITIZEN
IMPRISONED AS SPY. BY MALCOLM W. BROWNE. SPECIAL TO
THE NEW YORK TIMES. BELGRADE, YUGOSLAVIA, JULY 20 -
YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES MADE IT KNOWN TODAY THEY PLANNED TO
RELEASE ON FRIDAY AN AMERICAN CITIZEN IMPRISONED FOR A
YEAR ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES.

THE CASE HAS BECOME A CAUSE CELEBRE HERE, AND IS REGARDED
BY MANY WESTERN DIPLOMATS AS PRIMARILY A POLITICAL LEVER
DEvised BY BELGRADE TO BRING PRESSURE AGAINST WASHINGTON.

ACRIMONIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE CASE BY AMERICAN AND YUGO-
SLAV OFFICIALS HAS CONTRIBUTED STRONGLY TO THE CURRENT
CHILLY STATE OF YUGOSLAV-AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

LAST JULY 31, LASZLO TOTH, A 44-YEAR-OLD SUGAR REFINING
ENGINEER FROM LOVELAND COLO., WAS ARRESTED IN THE YUGO-
SLAV TOWN OF VRBAS NORTH OF HERE. HE WAS SEIZED AT A
SUGAR REFINERY WHERE HE HAD ONCE BEEN EMPLOYED BEFORE HIS
EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES AND SUBSEQUENT NATURALI-
ZATION AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

SINCE THEN, MR. TOTH HAS BEEN DENIED ACCESS TO AMERICAN
OFFICIALS. LAST NOVEMBER, HE WAS BROUGHT BEFORE A COURT
IN SECRET SESSION, CONVICTED OF ESPIONAGE AND SENTENCED
TO SEVEN YEARS IN PRISON.

THE CASE HAS NEVER BEEN REPORTED IN THE COMMUNIST-CONTROL
LED PRESS HERE, BUT YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS HAVE SAID PRIVATE-
LY THE CHARGES AGAINST MR. TOTH WERE BASED ON HIS HAVING
TAKEN PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SUGAR REFINERY IN VRBAS.

THE PLANT, WHICH PROCESSES SUGAR-BEETS IS EQUIPPED WITH
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MACHINERY FROM WEST GERMANY. NO EVIDENCE HAS BEEN
OFFERED BY YUGOSLAVS, EVEN IN PRIVATE, THAT THE PLANT
OR ITS ENVIRONS IN ANYWAY INVOLVE YUGOSLAV NATIONAL
SECURITY.

AMERICAN OFFICIALS HAVE SAID PRIVATELY THEY ARE SATISFIED
MR. TOTH HAD NO CONNECTION WITH ANY AMERICAN AGENCY AND
WAS NOT PROVIDING AMERICANS WITH INTELLIGENCE OF ANY KIND

A SERIES OF HIGH-LEVEL AMERICAN PROTESTS AND REPRESENTATIONS HAD NO APPARENT EFFECT.

AT ONE POINT, YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS SEEMED TO IMPLY TO VARI-

OUS FOREIGNERS THAT MR. TOTH MIGHT BE RELEASED IF UNITED STATES POLICE AGENCIES WOULD SHOW COOPERATION WITH THE BELGRADE GOVERNMENT. THE COOPERATION, IT WAS IMPLIED, WOULD BE IN THE FORM OF INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY AMERICAN POLICE OFFICIALS TO BELGRADE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF YUGOSLAV RESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES WHO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT TITO. END TEXT. KISSINGER

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